

## **Economic Development Assessment of Goals & Objectives**

### **Introduction**

The Cambridge community's overall quality of life is based, in part, on business growth and stability. The Economic Development Division's (EDD) efforts focus on activities designed to meet the City's need for a diversified and thriving economic base by providing a broad range of services to assist small businesses including supporting entrepreneurship, working to maintain a diversified employment base and revitalizing businesses in the City's commercial districts.

Toward this end, the Division has several programs that are operated internally and others that work with collaborative partnerships. We will continue to form alliances with support agencies to provide assistance to low-income small businesses in order to increase their ability to provide job opportunities for our residents and the goods and services they need.

**Objective #1: Cultivate a supportive environment for entrepreneurship.** Enhance the growth of Cambridge's economy by cultivating small businesses.

- **Non-profit Sponsored Programs**

The Department continued its support of Cambridge small business by contracting with a non-profit organization, The Cambridge Business Development Center (CBDC), to provide pre-business and business development educational services for low and low-moderate income micro-enterprises through workshops, seminars, and class series. Business Planning workshops targeted clientele typically in a pre-business development stage. Clientele learned to understand the essential elements of a business plan and the purpose for having one. Emphasis was more on whether the proposed business can be feasible than on developing a polished written document. Topics such as understanding the market for a product or service, understanding the competition, and simple financial projections to assess whether the business can be viable were covered. The program served only income eligible, aspiring or existing micro-enterprises. Getting Started In Business seminars introduced aspiring entrepreneurs to the fundamentals of launching a business. Business Basics for Family Child Care Provider classes had clientele learn to prepare a business concept statement, to define their target value and target market, to produce simple marketing materials including a brochure and business cards; clientele learned to establish contractual materials related to the services offered and incorporate them into a parent handbook; clientele learned the basics of business and personal financial planning.

Outreach and marketing activities include meetings with other non-profit organizations that serve low-mod income clientele for exchange of information on

programs, advertise in their newsletters and explore other possible collaborations, direct and partner postcard mailings, e-mails to other class participants, flyer to low-mod income housing areas and community bulletin boards, notices to community calendars in local and area newspapers, public service announcements on local cable TV and radio stations, a listing on websites including Agency, Career Source and a local sponsor bank.

***Accomplishments:*** During the reporting period, fiscal year 2004, 32 micro-enterprises received assistance from the Cambridge Business Development Center. The center provided seminars on “Getting Started in Business” attended by 18 clients; workshops in “Business Planning” attended by 13 clients and classes for “Business Basics for Family Child Care Providers” attended by 1 client. CDD has contracted with a new vendor, the Center for Women and Enterprise to offer the “Financial Literacy Training” to eligible residents from the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area. This program had to be postponed until fiscal Year 2005 to enable the Center for Women and Enterprise to adequately market this program to NRS residents. The goal in FY 2005 is to offer this program to a minimum of 20 NRS residents.

## **Objective #2: Promote thriving retail districts**

- **Best Retail Practices Program**

Best Retail Practices is designed to assist Cambridge retailers and restaurateurs improve the interior appearance and design of their establishments, their marketing and the operating efficiency of their businesses. The City hired 2 consultants to provide expert advice to participants about such topics as lighting, window display, interior layout, color and signage, as well as management issues, security and marketing.

The program is divided into three parts; all were offered during the reporting period. Part I was a Workshop offered to all Cambridge retailers and used as an outreach activity to find income eligible micro-enterprises or businesses located in the NRS to participate in Part II, Individual In-Store Consultations. At the workshop the City's consultants gave a Power-Point presentation of visual examples of best retail practices and marketing strategies and provided a handout of the presentation and "tips" on marketing and design for participants to take back to their establishments. Eligibility requirements (according to HUD guidelines) were explained by City staff and applications for Part II were taken from eligible applicants.

Part II provided individual in-store consultations to eligible applicants. The consultants and EDD staff visited participant businesses, made recommendations for improvements and sent a detailed written report to the store-owners of the suggested recommendations, including helpful sketches and photographs. After a 4 week period, the businesses received a follow-up visit to address any questions and see if the recommended changes had been implemented. A written report on the follow-up visit was then sent to each participant.

Part III, a grant assistance program, was launched in this Program Year. Using Block Grant funds, the Grant Program offered matching grants to participants who had completed Part II of the program. The grants helped participants finance the costs of the recommended improvements to store interiors or marketing. The dollar amount of the grants were given on an 80% reimbursement basis, up to a total of \$5,000.

***Accomplishments:*** In Fiscal Year 2004, a total of 43 businesses participated in Part I of the Best Retail Practice Program. 26 of the 43 continued on to Part II and of those 26, 5 received grants. Grants were awarded for such improvements as a Point of Sale Inventory System for a small specialty retailer, new flooring for a retail meat market, new furniture for several restaurants and kitchen equipment for a restaurateur. Unfortunately, due to a prolonged leave of absence by a key staff member, the Economic Development Department was unable to thoroughly analyze the complete record of FY 2004's comparable sales data for this report.

### **Objective #3 Support bio-medical and healthcare careers training programs**

#### **Biomedical Careers Training Program: Just A Start**

The Cambridge Biomedical Careers Program (CBCP) was offered by a local non-profit, Just A Start (JAS), in an effort to expand training opportunities to residents of the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRS). The CBCP provided program graduates with the necessary skills for entry-level jobs in the biomedical field with local biotechnology companies.

CBCP consisted of nine months of academic classes, laboratory training, job-readiness classes, counseling followed by job placement assistance. The program included college level classes, tutoring in biology, chemistry, biochemistry, medical terminology, computers and laboratory techniques. Classes were held at JAS and at Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC), locations close to public transportation and easily accessible to the NRS participants. Graduates were eligible for up to 18 college credits from BHCC and upon completion of all requirements, received a certificate from JAS and BHCC. The program ran for one calendar year.

JAS tracked the outcome of these trainings to the participants. Tracking consisted of maintaining case files on participants with academic and lab skills test scores, career planning activities, tutoring, job placement as well as follow-up phone calls to participants and employers regarding participants' assimilation and job performance after the participant is placed on the job.

Since the program began 12 years ago, 26 area companies have hired 114 graduates as employees, temps or interns.

#### ***Accomplishment - Just A Start Biomedical Careers Program:***

In the current economic climate, hiring among biotech companies and well as others has been slow. In an effort to increase job placement of program participants, CDD/EDD along with other community partners hosted a community breakfast for larger Cambridge biotech companies in order to promote hiring of program graduates. To date 2 of the 8 graduates have been placed in jobs as technicians.

#### **Health Care Program: Cambridge Health Alliance**

The Cambridge Health Alliance is a regional health care system comprised of three hospitals, more than 20 primary care sites, the Cambridge Public Health Department and Network Health, a statewide managed Medicaid health plan.

The Cambridge Healthcare Career Advancement Program (CHCAP) was contracted to provide training services for NRS residents. Last year, the Alliance began training 22 existing Cambridge Health Alliance (Alliance) employees from the NRS area so that they could advance into higher-level jobs earning higher salaries. This year the 22 continued their course work in this 2-year program that consists of three program levels. At Level I, participants take basic English and Math classes including English as a Second Language, if necessary. Level II consist of higher-level math, reading

and writing classes. At Level III, participants take college level math, writing and science courses. Also at Level III, participants identify individual areas of interest and begin taking appropriate classes leading to a certification in their chosen fields of study.

The goals of the program include education and training for incumbent workers residing in the NRS area, offering enhanced opportunities for job advancement, providing training for medical certificates and degrees ultimately leading to economic self-sufficiency for incumbent workers of the Alliance. Employees currently working at the lowest entry-level jobs are being trained to enter professions in the key shortage areas, at the Alliance and elsewhere, such as laboratory technicians, nursing, occupational therapy, pharmacy, physical therapy and radiological sciences. Program evaluation takes place twice annually.

***Accomplishments - Cambridge Health Alliance:***

Of the 22 participants enrolled in the program since inception, all but one student received 'A's in math and the remaining student received a grade of B+. Even though the program has not completed its initial 2-year timeframe, it has garnered significant interest and requests from incumbent workers who are non-NRS residents to allow them to enroll in this or a similar program.

Four participants have applied and were accepted to the Alliance's STARS program, a CHA employee retention program that provides \$2,000 per year in additional tuition assistance toward an Associate Degree plus a minimum of \$600 in tuition reimbursement. Three are entering the nursing field and one radiology. In exchange the STARS participants commit to 2 years of work for the Alliance for every year of funding. Often these funds are used after graduating from the CHCAP.

The Alliance is currently applying to a BEST grant from the State and, if successful, it will enable non-NRS and non-Cambridge residents to enroll in the program.

## Economic Development: Total Accomplishments

